Re:*Port*

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Programs for business, programming, and fun

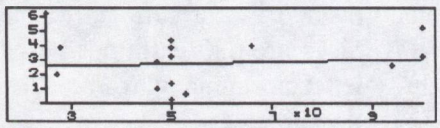
One of the biggest requests Re:*Port* has received since the last issue is for reviews and descriptions of the programs that are available for the Portfolio. So in this issue we take a look at four programs — three on ROM card from Atari, and one on floppy disk from the Disk-Count company.

FINANCE

The Finance card (manufacturer's suggested retail price: $89.95; Re:*Port* subscriber price: $71.96) is one of Atari's longest-available and perhaps least well-known programs for the Portfolio. It certainly does not deserve to lurk in the shadows, as it is a powerful program with a wealth of features for business users.

The Finance card performs the following functions: Analysis of loans and investments, including amortization; interest rate conversions; calculation of discounted cash flow, internal rate of return, net present value, and payback periods; graphing and comparisons of two sets of data; statistical forcasting with linear regression fitting; calculation of business mark ups and mark downs and depreciation; analysis of a business' breakeven point on products.

The well-written manual includes different story-type problems that step you through each feature of the program. The problems are set up as real-world examples that are actually useful in everyday life.



A Finance card statistics graph

For instance, the manual tells you how to use the program's "Time Value of Money" features to calculate how much you'd have to pay each month in order to pay off your credit card balance.

The program has some impressive features aside from its financial calculation abilities. First is the power to graphically display data.

During most calculations, you can hit the Fn-3 key, and Finance will show you a graph of the data. The graphs are fairly simplistic, but such is the limitation of the Port's graphic screen.

Also, the Finance program is very well-linked to other applications. Finance can "talk" to the built-in editor, worksheet, and calculator.

You can bring up any of these applications "on top" of Finance. For example, while using Finance, you can switch to the calculator to perform a quick addition problem. Store

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What's Inside

From the Editor

Recommend Re:*Port* to a friend and get $5 off

Re:*Port* would like to thank all of you for subscribing and making the newsletter the success that it has been.

In order to expand our coverage, provide you with more and better programs on disk, and continue to give great prizes, we need to get even more subscribers. And there's a way that you can help, while helping yourself.

Get a friend to subscribe to Re:*Port*, and you'll receive a $5 Re:*Port* gift certificate to use for any product that we sell, or even to apply toward a renewal subscription next year.

Make sure that your friend writes your name and his or her preferred disk size and format (Macintosh disks are $20 extra per year) in a letter accompanying the subscription order.

Of course, there are other ways that you can help us. Write to us and let us know what you'd like to see on the pages of the next issue. Or write in with tips to share with other users. If you're a programmer and have something you'd like us to review, send a test copy! We'd be happy to spread the word about your work and how others can purchase your wares.

Thanks again. And happy new year from everyone here at Re:*Port*!

Built-in Editor

What to do when .HOO files don't work

Some users have had problems with the .HOO programs that tie into the Port's built-in editor. Here is a troubleshooter's guide to getting .HOO files to work.

Programs such as MACRO.HOO and SPLCHK.HOO that are found in issues #1 and #2 of Re:*Port* and ESHOW.HOO in this issue are regular programs that have ties into the built-in editor.

To run them, you put them in the root (main) directory of the A: drive, bring up the built-in editor, and press the Fn-6 key combination.

A menu of the available .HOO files should appear. Select the program you want to run by moving the cursor to that filename and press enter.

If you can't get the program to run, take the following steps:

1. Make sure all the files that were included with the program are copied onto the A: drive in the main directory.

Some .HOO files have other data files that they expect to find if they are to run correctly.

Copy every file that the documentation requires into the root (main) directory of the A: card.

If you issue the commands A:, CD \, and DIR, you should see your files.

2. Check your CONFIG.SYS file for the BUFFERS= line.

If the program still doesn't run, it should be giving you an error that reads "Failed to run program."

If that is the case, first try editing the file CONFIG.SYS on your C: drive.

If this file contains a line that says BUFFERS= and a number, delete this line and reboot the Portfolio.

Try running the .HOO file again.

3. Free more memory for the .HOO program by lowering the size of your C: drive.

If the program still won't run, backup all the files on your C: drive.

Then issue the FDISK command to reduce the size of your C: drive, which will in turn expand the memory that is available to the .HOO files.

Suggested C: drive size for people who run .HOO files often is 16K.

So, if you issue the command FDISK 16, you should be all set to run .HOO files.

If these steps don't work for you, contact Re:*Port*, and we will help you get the programs up and running right away.

Industry News

Portfolio memory, cards get cheaper

There's some good news to report in the industry news column this month. Readers will recall last issue's letter from Don McKenzie in Australia, who was frustrated in his attempts to create ROM cards.

Well, no longer. Mr. McKenzie finally received his technical guide and was able to finish his project. He even sent a sample to Re:*Port*. It is a board about one and a half times the length of a RAM card. It plugs into the A: drive slot and works like a regular card.

The end of the card sticks out from the Portfolio a little less than two inches (the final version will be shorter). It is no frills; it looks like an electronics project, which it is. Seated in the middle of the section of the board is a socket for a chip, which Mr. McKenzie says he has tested up to 64K in size, although 128K may work as well, in both ROM and even RAM!

The potential is now here for cheap ROM and RAM cards. Users must use their own EEPROM burner to create the ROM cards, but Mr. McKenzie provides the software necessary to do this. He is making a special offer to Re:*Port* readers who are interested in building their own cards. Mr. McKenzie writes:

"If any hardware types (kit builders) would like one of these prototype boards, I will make them available at US$30 to cover my initial setup costs. This price includes IBM software on 3.5" 720K floppy, PFEPROM prototype board, 4 suitable plastic credit cards, (2 spare for when you get it wrong) full assembly instructions, postage, and international exchange fee. Please make a check out to Don McKenzie payable at an Australian bank for US$30. I would like to think that it is in the interest of all Portfolio users to help get a new product off the ground that may change the development speed and eventual history of the Portfolio."

If you're at all interested in cheaper ROM and RAM cards, at least write to Mr. McKenzie and express your interest in his efforts. You may contact him at: Don McKenzie, 29 Ellesmere Cres. Tullamarine 3043, Victoria, Australia.

Megabyte Computers of Texas has made their 512K internal memory upgrade for the Portfolio even better —by lowering the price! The cost of the upgrade is now $299. Many Re:*Port* readers have received the upgrade and speak highly of the service. Contact Megabyte for more information at 1-817-589-2950.

If you'd like to expand your program collection with shareware and public domain programs but don't have a subscription to an online service, there's a solution. Bill Pike has collected a variety of programs on disk for you. They range from utilities to programming languages. Mr. Pike seems to have collected many of the more useful and important programs that are available.

The price of these disks is $12.00 ($14.00 Canadian), postpaid. For more information, contact Bill Pike, 7375 S.W. Scholls Ferry Rd. #6, Beaverton, OR 97005 USA. The disks will be shipped via First Class Mail.

Speaking of programming languages for the Port, there is now an option for Forth users. It is called UTIL. The system is $70 for the Port on an IBM format disk.

UTIL includes a Forth compiler, an 8086 assembler for speed critical routines, a decompiler and disassembler for testing and debugging, a User's Guide with tutorial, and source code utilities and examples. For more information, write to Essex Marketing Services, Inc., 272 Old Farms Road, Simsbury, CT 06070 USA.

Some bad news from Atari: Hyperlist isn't ready yet. Atari reports that they are waiting for manuals before they can ship any copies. Already, Re:*Port* users have placed several orders for the data organizer and outlining program. Those orders, and any others that we receive before Hyperlist ships, will be among the first in line. We appreciate your patience in this matter.

More bad news, at least for those of you who may be looking for a more full-featured checkbook program than this issue's CHECK.EXE. The Intuit company, makers of the popular desktop program Quicken, has completed a study of target groups focusing on whether they should create a Portfolio version of Quicken. According to the company, the results were "very underwhelming." Of course, this isn't what they had hoped to hear. They are now considering working on a travel expense tracking program, but they are unsure of the direction they will take. If you would like to tell them that their target group study was off-base, you can contact them at Intuit, 540 University Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94301. Telephone: 1-415-322-0573.

Featured utilities

Stay balanced while on the road

For travellers, keeping track of expenses while on the road can be difficult. But not with the Portfolio and CHECK.EXE, this issue's featured program.

With CHECK, you can keep track of all of your transactions either as they happen or at the end of the day. After inputting them, CHECK lets you know what your account's balance is. And when you get home, CHECK's data can be imported into the popular desktop program Quicken. You can also export data from Quicken to CHECK so that you will always have current balance data on hand.

Using CHECK is simple. Just copy CHECK.EXE to the Portfolio and type CHECK at the DOS prompt.

The program will display a title screen. Hit any key. It then prompts you for a filename. If you just hit enter, CHECK will use the default file CHECK.TXT. The purpose of being able to enter other filenames is so you can record separate accounts under different filenames.

CHECK then presents you with the check entry screen (figure 1). Note that it displays the system date automatically; however, you may edit it if you wish.

The program's input screen is simple. As an overview, use the cursor keys to move from field to field. As you do, an explanation of that field appears on the bottom of the screen. To edit a field, just hit enter and an editing window will appear. Or, just start typing, and the editing window will pop up and accept your input.

CHECK stands ready for you to enter an amount. Begin typing, and an editing window pops up. For the amount, type in the value of the transaction, preceding it with a minus sign if it is a payment or withdrawal. Hit enter when you are done inputting the amount.

Now, you are prompted for the Number. Enter the check number or ATM if it is a withdrawal from an ATM machine.

In the Payee field, write who the check was written to or who wrote you the check (in that case it is technically a Payor field). Note that you may type in up to 31 characters; although they are all stored, only the few that can fit on the screen are displayed.

The Memo field is next. Write any notes you have.

In the Cat. field, type the category of the transaction.

```
CHECK=Re:Port newsletter

Date   : 12/28/91   Payee:
Amount:             Memo :
Number:             Cat. :
Balance: 0.00

Amount of transaction
```

Figure 1

```
CHECK=Re:Port newsletter
        File Menu
Date   :  Post check
Amount:   Save and exit
Number:   Quit, no save
Balance:

Amount of transaction
```

Figure 2

This field is mostly useful only to those people who will be transferring the data to Quicken later.

Note that you can't edit the balance, nor is it updated until you post the transaction. More on that later.

You may now scroll around your data using the cursor keys, editing anything you wish. When you are satisfied with the transaction, press ESC. You will see a menu like that in figure 2. You have three choices:

"Post check" will save the current check, update the balance, and display clean transaction fields. Use this function if you have more data to enter.

"Save and exit" will save the current check and end CHECK. Use this after entering your last transaction.

"Quit, no save" will quit the program without saving the current transaction. Use this if you don't want to post the last check you entered and want to quit.

The data is saved in ASCII format in the filename that you specified. You may edit it using the built-in editor if you wish to review it or make changes. The codes in there are for importing the data into Quicken.

Quicken users will find the exchange feature quick and easy. Transfer the CHECK.TXT data file to your desktop and press F2, 6, from Quicken's register menu.

You may also export data from Quicken to CHECK. To do that, go into Quicken's register, press F2, 5. Transfer the resulting data file to the Portfolio and load it into CHECK. The balance field should match your last balance in Quicken.

Featured utilities

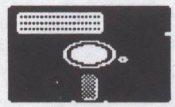
Settings program customizes your Port

Many Portfolio users who run DOS programs on their palmtops have to go through the same old ritual every time they reboot their machine: Going into the settings menu and selecting a tracked screen, setting refresh to keys, and maybe even increase the Port's speed.

Or maybe you're the type who doesn't like keyclicks, so you have to turn them off every time you reboot.

SETTINGS.EXE changes all that. Just put the program on your Portfolio's C: drive. (Note: Place it in the root directory for best results). Add the command SETTINGS to your AUTOEXEC.BAT file, or create a file called AUTOEXEC.BAT with the word SETTINGS in it if you don't have one already.

Now, using the setup menu, make your typical changes to the Portfolio's settings, such as muting everything or changing the external screen mode. Then type SETTINGS /S ... this one-time procedure will make SETTINGS look at your current setup and store everything about your system settings in a file called C:\SYSTEM\SETTINGS.INI.



The Featured Utilities can be found on Re:*Port* Disk #3 in the \CHECK, \SETTINGS, and \PIANO subdirectories.

From this point on, whenever you reboot your computer, SETTINGS will run and make all the setup changes for you automatically.

You may also run SETTINGS yourself by typing that name at the DOS command line. This is useful if you've made a minor setting change and wish to return to your regular way of working without having to enter the setup menu again.

The SETTINGS.INI file is a plain text file that you may edit. Once you do, run SETTINGS again for your changes to take effect.

Piano brings out the musician in the Portfolio and its users

The Portfolio can produce sounds. And now you can turn those sounds into music!

PIANO.EXE is useful for the musician on the go who has a flash of inspiration, or for any Port user that likes to take a break and play some music.

To use Piano, first copy the file PIANO.EXE to your Portfolio. Then, simply type PIANO to get started.

The screen displays four lines. The top line shows the keys that you should hit to play the sharp notes (the black keys on a piano keyboard). The next line shows what note those keys correspond to. The bottom line of the screen shows the keys that correspond to the keyboard's white keys (with the Enter key represented by two wavy lines). The line above that shows the notes that those keys actually produce. Hit any of those keys, and an arrow displays the note you just played (see figure 3). For instance, hit Y to get middle C.

That's all there is to it, if you just feel like playing a melody or writing a song. However, if you wish to save your work and play it again and again, you can.

Hit the S key to begin saving your work. The word "SAVE" appears down the right-hand side of the screen.

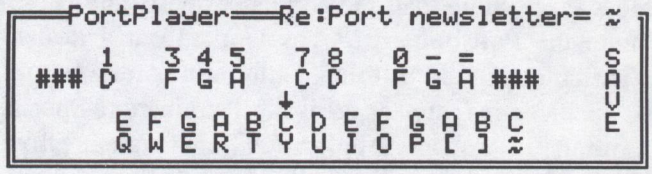


Figure 3

When that word is on, everything you type will be saved to memory. Hit S again to turn save mode off. You may turn save mode on again to append more notes to your song. If you want the Port to play back what you've saved in memory, hit the spacebar. If you want to clear memory, hit C. In order to save the song (or load an old song) to disk, press D (for (d)isk functions) or the Atari key. Either one will bring up a save and load menu.

If you choose save, you will be asked for a filename, and the Port will save your song to that file, without erasing it from memory.

If you choose load, you will be asked for a filename, and the Port will load that file into memory, clearing whatever song was in memory before that. To play the song you loaded, hit the spacebar. You may append to that song by hitting S.

Program reviews Continued from Page 1

the result in one of the calculator's memories, and Finance will be able to read the result.

In this way, Atari was cleverly able to add calculator features to Finance without having to reprogram them.

How Finance links with the editor and the worksheet is less impressive. It can export to those two programs only. It exports a text file to the editor that you can edit and print out later. When you export to a worksheet, it exported only as text fields rather than formulas, so using Finance is not a quick way to create an amortization worksheet if you don't know the formulas.

Overall, Finance ranks highly as a business tool. It also scores very highly in the documentation department. You may want to buy the card just so you can get the User's Manual, which gives short lessons on financial analysis while it teaches you how to use the program. The link with the calculator is innovative, but Finance's links with the editor and the worksheet leave much to be desired.

TERMINATOR 2 FILE MANAGER CARD

The Portfolio plays a small role in the movie "Terminator 2: Judgment Day." The character John Connor uses it to break into bank machines. Although Atari doesn't promote that, the company does want to promote the Portfolio, so it has worked out a deal to distribute special Portfolios with Terminator 2 tie-ins.

Included in that package is the Terminator 2 Special Edition File Manager Application Card (available from Atari directly for around $30; contact Don Thomas, Portfolio marketing manager, at 1-408-745-2031 for more information. Re:*Port* will also give one away as this issue's contest prize!)

Although the T2 card is mostly show, it also has some useful programs included.

When the Portfolio is rebooted with the T2 card inserted, the user suddenly sees rows of numbers flashing randomly across the screen — a simulation of descrambling a bank machines Personal Identification Numbers. When the correct number is "found" (chosen randomly, actually, no help to any potential bank robbers), the card sets up your Portfolio automatically with the correct AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS files, and adds the very important program UPDATE.COM to your system. It also displays some nice graphics screens.

Terminator 2 graphics screens

After that, you get the same File Manager program that comes with regular Portfolios.

However, also stored on the card are many useful programs and text files that make the card worth the purchase price, just so you can have these files around on a ROM card, not taking up valuable space, but ready when you need them.

Those files include:

EZ_REF.ADR: An address book file that contains a list of Portfolio products, both from Atari and third-party sources. Includes phone numbers and prices.

XTERM.COM: A communications program for the Portfolio that includes the popular Xmodem protocol for doing uploads and downloads.

CLOCK.EXE: A program that displays the time in large numbers.

PGSHOW.EXE: A program that displays .PGC graphics files.

PORTRIS.EXE: A game similar to the popular Tetris.

COUNT.HOO: An editor .HOO file that counts the number of words in your document.

BALANCE.WKS: A worksheet file that keeps track of your checkbook.

The T2 card also includes a single-page sheet of instructions, but the full instructions for the programs that you'd use are included on the card in the form of editor-readable .TXT files.

As a program useful to business users, the T2 card ranks low. As a collection of nice utilities and as a marketing ploy, the T2 card scores. But what's next? The Portfolio also appears frequently on the FOX TV show "Parker Lewis Can't Lose." Maybe Atari could

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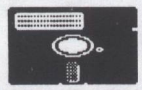
PBASIC

Using development systems on the PC and setting up serial communications



Gleason on PBASIC

ON DISK POWED and PBE can be found on Re:Port Disk #3 in the \PBASIC subdirectory.

Portfolio Programming on a PC

The PBASIC Interpreter and the PowerBASIC compiler are both designed to run on the Portfolio, but they will also run on a PC. Since neither of them have a built-in editor, two editors have been developed to allow for quick and easy program development on your desktop.

PBE 2.0

The PBASIC Editor 2.0 is a full screen text editor, very similar to that of Turbo Pascal 3.0. But it has a couple of built in additions. The first is that you can invoke and run your program with the PBASIC interpreter. Pressing ALT-R while in the editor will save your file and run the PBASIC interpreter.

Version 2.0 also adds Portfolio Emulation. There are many features in PBASIC that are listed as "Portfolio Only." They access special features built into the Portfolio's ROM chips. Since standard PC's do not have these features, you will get the "Portfolio Only Feature Error", when you try to run programs containing statements such as BOX, MENU, SCRSAVE, SCRLOAD and others. PBE 2.0 includes built in software that will emulate the Portfolio functions on a PC. So you can now run and test Port programs on a PC.

POWED 1.0

The PowerBASIC editor is based on the PBE editor. The major difference is that you can only COMPILE the PowerBASIC programs, you can not run them. While this might not appear to be much of a benefit, you do get the advantage of an 80x25 screen, and the editor will point to the line that the compile error appears on.

To use POWED, you need to copy PB.RUN from the PowerBASIC ROM card to your PC and rename it PB.COM. Invoke POWED with the name of the file, and press ALT-C to compile. When the compile is complete, you will have a .COM file that can be copied to the Portfolio. To speed things up, the <F7> key will invoke FT.COM and send the file that you compiled.

SERIAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Portfolio has a non-standard serial port, and a non-standard Interrupt Structure. This prevents standard Serial Communication programs from working. While, at present, PBASIC does not use interrupt driven communications, it does allow you to access the serial port, with 4 simple commands.

The first two concern the settings and status of the serial port. COMSET will set the serial Port to the proper configuration.

```
COMSET = config
```

The value for config is determined by the following table:

7 6 5	4 3	2	1 0
Baud Rate	Parity	Stop Bits	Word Length
0 0 0 = 110	x 0 = none	0 = 1 bits	1 0 = 7 bits
0 0 1 = 150	0 1 = odd	1 = 2 bits	1 1 = 8 bits
0 1 0 = 300	1 1 = even		
0 1 1 = 600			
1 0 0 = 1200			
1 0 1 = 2400			
1 1 0 = 4800			
1 1 1 = 9600			

So, if we want to set the serial port to 300 baud, No Parity, 8 bits, and 1 Stop bit, we would get the following pattern of bits:

300	No	1	8
0 1 0	0 0	0	1 1

Which would be 43 hexadecimal, or 67 decimal. We would then use the statement COMSET = 6 to initialize the serial port.

Now that we have initialized the serial port to the correct speed, we have to check when a character is in the serial port buffer, or when we can transmit a character. This is done by checking the status port with the COMSTAT function.

COMSTAT will return a 16 bit value, where each bit

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PBASIC Continued from Page 7

is an indicator. Here is the list:

Bit	Significance (if set to 1)
Port Status	
15	timed-out
14	transmit shift register empty
13	transmit holding register empty
12	break detected
11	framing error detected
10	parity error detected
9	overrun error detected
8	receive data ready
Modem Status	
7	receive line signal detect
6	ring indicator
5	data-set-ready
4	clear-to-send
3	change in receive line signal detect
2	trailing edge ring indicator
1	change in data-set-ready status
0	change in clear-to-send status

The two important bits to examine are 13 and 8. Bit 13 indicates when we can send a character to the port, while bit 8 tells us when a character has arrived from the remote system. The rest of the bits can be used to check other information.

For example, to see if a character is waiting:

```
if (comstat and &h100)<>0 then ?"Character Waiting"
```

Now to actually send the character to and from the serial port, we need another function and statement.

COMIN will read a character from the serial port. It will return the ASCII value (a number) of the character waiting at the serial port. Why return a number? Due to the design of PBASIC, strings can not contain the ASCII value 0. In order to make sure this value would be received correctly, the ASCII value is returned instead of the character. To print the actually character, use the CHR$() function. To just read and display characters coming in the serial port:

```
1 if (comstat and &h100)<>0 then
    a=comin       : ' read character
    print chr$(a); : ' print it
  endif
  goto 1
```

To transmit a character, the statement COMOUT is used. This also requires an ASCII value. You can get the ASCII value of a character using the ASC() function.

Here is a listing for a simple terminal program.

About the Author

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EMAIL : bjgleas@auvm.american.edu

```
' TERMINAL.BAS A simple half-duplex terminal program
' Remove line number 2 and 4 if host sends LF
' Remove line number 3 for full-duplex
'
comset=67  : ' 300,N81
1 if (comstat and &h100)<>0 then
    a=comin       : ' read character
    print chr$(a); : ' print it
2   if a=13 then print  : ' new line
  endif
  a$=inkey$           : ' check for keypress
  if a$="" then goto 1      : ' if none, check incoming
  if a$=chr$(27) then 6     : ' ESC key to exit
3 print a$;                 : ' Print keyboard char
4 if a$=chr$(13) then print : ' new line
5 if (comstat and &h2000)<>0 then 5
  comout=asc(a$)            : ' send it
  goto 1
6 end
```

NOTE: Since the serial communications are currently handled by the ROM BIOS in the Portfolio, and are not interrupt driven, it is not recommended that you try to commuincate at speeds faster than 300 baud. Higher speeds are possible, but you must have a high inter-character delay. For example, I can manually type from one machine to another at 9600 baud with out losing characters, but I can not send a file — the Port will lose characters. Plans are underway for PBASIC 5.0 to be interrupt driven, which would then be able to handle the higher speeds.

Online Services

GEnie begins chats; CompuServe has marathons

Since last issue's article about online services that support the Atari Portfolio, the two major services have seen a flurry of activity.

GEnie recently began weekly live conferences, hosted by Re:*Port* newsletter editor David E. Stewart. The conferences run from 10 p.m. to 12 a.m. Eastern Time on Sunday nights. Topics are open now, but in the future may focus on certain aspects of the Portfolio such as using internal applications, using DOS, or programming. Conference participants also had a chance to win GEnie online time.

Message activity has been picking up on GEnie during the past month. Many new users are finding quick responses to their questions about using the Portfolio with the Atari ST. Also, representatives from the Writers' Ink roundtable on GEnie have been frequenting the GEnie Portfolio area for information on how to make the Portfolio into an "electronic book," much like the Sony Data Discman in Japan.

A recent advance in that area came in the form of a program by BJ Gleason, which he uploaded to CompuServe. Called PREAD, it can turn documents into standalone programs with the file-viewer built right in. BJ even uploaded the full text of "Alice in Wonderland." So electronic books may not be too far behind for the Portfolio. As an example of the power of PREAD, I've put this column in electronic form in the file REPORT.COM in the ONLINE subdirectory of your included disk. Hit the ? to get a help screen that describes the features of the file viewer.

Speaking of CompuServe, the big news these past two months has been the programming marathon, which has boosted the number of files online there to more than 600!

BJ Gleason, Don Messerli, and David Stewart each wrote one program every three days for two months, and other forum members pitched in with contributions as well. Many of the programs were written in response to users' requests.

Many of the files that David Stewart wrote for the marathon are all available on your Re:*Port* Disk #3, under the online subdirectory. Document files are on the disk as well. Files not included here were either demonstration programs or earlier versions of the ones included here. The programs are:

BIGBAN: Lets you type in a message, which scrolls across your screen in big letters. Useful for presentations.

BANNER2: Similar to BIGBAN, but uses smaller letters for faster scrolling.

CGASHOW: For use on your desktop computer. Displays .PGX and .PGC graphics using a CGA monitor.

CODE and DECODE: Simple editor hooks to encode and decode data.

DIAL: A program that will search your address book and dial any number from the DOS command line.

ESHOW: A program that will display .PGC files from within the built-in editor, to create a Hypertext-like file.

LAUNCH: A DOS shell for the Port.

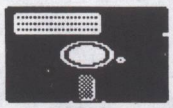
MAC: A macro editor for the Portfolio.

MUTE: Turns sounds on or off.

PGCUNIT: Turbo Pascal unit to help programmers add .PGC graphics to their programs.

SCRMODE: A program to display the current screen mode.

Continued on Page 10



ON DISK

Catalogues of the new files available on CompuServe and GEnie are available on your Re:*Port* Disk #3 in the \ONLINE directory, along with the CompuServe marathon files.

CompuServe wants all Re:*Port* readers who aren't members to sign up now, so they've put forward a special offer to our subscribers.

You can get a sign-up kit and $15 worth of free connect time by calling (800) 848-8199 (ask for Operator 198). Tell them that you heard about this from Re:*Port*, an APORTFOLIO forum member.

The $15 free time offer is open only to people who do not yet have a membership.

Online Continued from Page 9

SECURE: Displays your name and address and locks the Portfolio with a password. Useful if your Port gets lost or to keep prying eyes off your data.

TRIG: Does trigonometry calculations.

Now that the marathon is over, CompuServe's Portfolio forum strongly suggests that other users take advantage of the downloads and even upload more themselves.

The next big event on CompuServe in the Portfolio forum will be a 24-hour live conference, dubbed the Port-a-Thon. It begins at 3 p.m. EST on Friday, February 21.

For a special offer on joining CompuServe, see the information box on Page 8.

Program reviews Continued from Page 6

come out with a Day-Glo Portfolio with a high-school class scheduler program.

POWERBASIC

Programming for the Portfolio has definitely taken a BASIC slant. BJ Gleason offers his PBASIC, and Atari has PowerBASIC (manufacturer's suggested retail price: $99.95; Re:*Port* subscriber price, $71.96).

The difference between the two is simple. PBASIC is an interpretor, whereas PowerBASIC is a compiler. That means that PowerBASIC programs run faster.

However, there is a bigger difference that should influence your decision of which BASIC language to use. PBASIC was written with all of the Portfolio's built-in features in mind. For instance, it is easy to access graphics and menu systems with PBASIC. Unfortunately, that isn't so with PowerBASIC.

In order to access the Portfolio's special features with PowerBASIC, you'll need the Technical Reference Guide from Atari and a working knowledge of how MS-DOS interrupts work.

PowerBASIC does have some pluses. It is fast; it compiles small programs; it comes with example programs; it is highly compatible with the desktop version of PowerBASIC; and it has complete documenation. PowerBASIC does let you draw graphics with circles and lines, but it cannot easily access standard .PGX and .PGC files.

One final drawback to PowerBASIC: It requires you to have a file called PBRUN.RUN present whenever you run a PowerBASIC program. The file is about 25K. PBRUN.RUN is a library of PowerBASIC routines that otherwise would have to go into the PowerBASIC program itself. Instead, PowerBASIC programs compile to very small files.

So when working with PowerBASIC, it is highly recommended that you set your C: drive large enough to store PBRUN.RUN or purchase at least a 64K RAM card to keep everything in one place.

In conclusion, PowerBASIC is great on speed and ease of programming, but not on Portfolio-specific routines. It also requires some free RAM card or C: drive space.

However, if you wish to write an application for a client to use on the Portfolio, PowerBASIC may be the way to go (if you don't use Turbo Pascal of Assembler on your desktop computer), because you can offer a fast, compiled program without giving away the BASIC source code.

BUSINESS CONTACTS AND INFORMATION MANAGER

This program, from Disk-Count (1751 West County Road B, Ste. 107, St. Paul, MN 55113), is a personal information manager for either DOS ($69.95) or Windows ($99.95). We reviewed the Windows version.

The program doesn't seem to follow the typical rules of data entry for Windows. But the main point of this program is the ability to transfer data to the Portfolio.

Using a DOS program that you run separately (a terrible minus for a Windows program), you can transfer your client files to an .ADR file and your schedule files to a .DRY file. Transfers occur through the parallel port only, using the Port's built-in file transfer software.

Business Contacts and Information Manager gets high marks for the ability to keep your information consistent between the desktop and the Port, but low marks as a Windows program.

Contest

Reader wins modem; Terminator card next

Many thanks to everyone who entered our last contest. Your comments were interesting; we're going to incorporate them into the newsletter!

The winner was picked at random. Reader **Waldo Tobler** is now the owner of a Practical Peripherals 2400 Baud Pocket Modem for use with his Portfolio. He also will receive $50 of free CompuServe online time. Mr. Tobler, if you don't have a CompuServe ID, please see page 9 and find out how you can get a free sign-up kit and another $15 of free time online. Let us know your ID and we'll get the $50 worth of free time ready for you.

Surprisingly, not everyone entered our contest this time. So for this issue, the contest will be far more simple — every subscriber who corresponds with Re:*Port* will automatically be entered in the contest! You can either write via the US Mail, or send Email to 73770,2021 while on CompuServe or to DAVESTEWART on GEnie (note: that's a new GEnie ID).

The prize for this round will be the new Terminator 2 File Manager Card. It is sure to be a collector's item, and it includes many files that you'll want to add to your personal Portfolio collection. And, it's all on a ROM card.

Products and Back issues

How to order, and how long it will *really* take

Many readers who have just joined Re:*Port* have been requesting back issues of the newsletter. Those issues are available for $10 each, including diskette, or $5 without the diskette.

Issue #1 included MACRO.HOO and a full explanation of its use; a detailed description of PBASIC by BJ Gleason; DOS Tips; industry news; and tips on the worksheet and address book.

Our second issue included SPLCHK.HOO, a spelling checker for the Portfolio; a new version of PBASIC; a worksheet "trick" to turn it into a game; industry news; a backup and restore program; a full list of online programs; a review of Abacus' book about the Portfolio; and a comparison of PBASIC and PowerBASIC.

There has also been some question about Re:*Port*'s product service, as advertised in the Savings Surge flier.

The phrase "please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery" has been a cause of concern for many.

Re:*Port* delivers all orders free of charge via Parcel Post.

The four to six week guideline is therefore a disclaimer against postal slowness.

When Re:*Port* receives your order, it is immediately processed with our supplier and sent to you within a week.

If you would like faster service, add $5 per item and request UPS second-day air shipping.

Also, if you would like Re:*Port* to tell you when your order has been shipped, please send along your CompuServe or GEnie ID, or your phone number, and you will be contacted the day your order is shipped via UPS or Parcel Post.

For all orders, whether back issues or products, send check or money order to:

Re:*Port* newsletter
c/o David E. Stewart, editor
1618 South Beech Court
Broken Arrow, OK 74012-6205

Please itemize your order clearly, and include your phone number, CompuServe number or GEnie ID (if you have one), and a nine-digit ZIP code (if you know what yours is).

Unfortunately, Re:*Port* cannot yet accept credit card orders. If we are able to offer this service in the future, we will alert you as soon as possible.

Mailbox

Dear Re:*Port*:

I occasionally print directly to either an HP LaserJet III or Paintjet XL with excellent results, but find that ANSI.SYS must be installed. Some readers might find this information useful since it could apply to other printers as well. ANSI.SYS may be installed by adding the line DEVICE=A:\ANSI.SYS in the CONFIG.SYS [file] and placing ANSI.SYS on A:\.

— Dr. James G. Ard
Germany

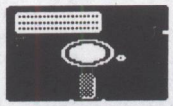
Editors' note: You will find the file ANSI.SYS in the MAIL subdirectory of your Re:*Port* Disk #3. We recommend putting ANSI.SYS in your C:\SYSTEM directory so it will be present no matter what A: card you are using. Of course, you'll have to revise the above statement to read DEVICE=C:\SYSTEM\ANSI.SYS.

Dear Re:*Port*:

We have had our Portfolio about a year and find it to be an integral part of our business. We travel rather extensively in our business and [the Port] is a supremely useful travel companion.

Here's a useful tip for the Portfolio:

Our business books — expenses, and so on — had not been done since June 30th, and we had a very large box full of receipts and such collected since then. Using the ADR facility, all we had to do was enter a line item number (eg., 71), space one, enter the amount, ESC, and the data was sorted by line item number and then by dollar amount in numerical, increasing order.



ON DISK The files ANSI.SYS, mentioned in the first letter, and UPDATE.COM, mentioned in the second letter, are in the \MAIL subdirectory of your Re:*Port* Disk #3

A fast print-out, and data went into the Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet very quickly. We ... went through that huge box of little slips of paper in something less than four hours! And, had it uploaded to our financial spreadsheet.

— Eldin Fender
California

Dear Re:*Port*:

[The Portfolio] saved the day for my fifth-grade son, who had to write a report and couldn't be home to type it. He was able to sit in the hall while I was at a meeting and produce two full pages of text, which we then polished up in WordPerfect.

Without the Portfolio, his paper would have been handed in late.

Questions like the following do come up:

Why do I get a hard return at the end of every line when I upload a .TXT file into my PC and then bring it into WordPerfect?

[Editor's reply: When typing a text file into the Portfolio that you know you will be transferring to another word processor, make sure that the Word Wrap feature is turned OFF. Hit ENTER only at the end of every paragraph, not every line. The text will be harder to read on the Portfolio, but much easier to import into your other word processor. Also, there are programs and macros available that strip the hard returns out of your file for you.]

Why does the entire machine sometimes freeze when I have alarms set?

[Editor's reply: What sort of alarms? Also, are you running UPDATE.COM? That program fixes bugs with the diary alarms, among other problems. You should run it every time you reboot your Portfolio (by adding the command UPDATE to your AUTOEXEC.BAT file).

UPDATE.COM is available in the MAIL subdirectory of your Re:*Port* Disk #3.]

Is there any way to increase the volume of the alarm?

[Editor's reply: The Port's alarm is pitifully quiet. Unfortunately, there is no known cure as of yet.]

The applications you sell such as Chess and Instant Speller — are they on a floppy?

[Editor's reply: No — they are supplied on a ROM card, so you do not need to sacrifice any space on your RAM cards or internal C: drive.]

— M. Zelner
New Jersey

Write to Re:*Port* with questions or tips for other users:

Re:*Port* newsletter
1618 South Beech Court
Broken Arrow, OK 74012-6205